



# The Searcher

Suncoast Genealogy Society Newsletter

## What's happening in September

### 27 September 2025 SGS Membership Meeting

1:30-4:00 pm, Palm Harbor Library

1:30 SGS Meeting, 2:00 Program

### Understanding AI in Genealogy: Foundations and Tools

#### Make AI Your Personal Genealogy Assistant

Learn how artificial intelligence can help with your family history research. This presentation covers what AI is, how it works, and which tools are most useful for genealogy. We'll look at popular AI assistants like ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini and discuss what each one does best. You'll learn how to work effectively with AI, including how to ask questions that get the best results and how to verify the information it provides. Whether you're new to AI or already experimenting with it, this session will help you understand how to use these tools responsibly in your genealogy work.



Diana Elder AG, AGL  
via Zoom

### 25 Oct 2025 SGS Mini-Seminar

1:00-4:00 pm, Palm Harbor Library

Speaker Live on Zoom

*Lisa Louise Cooke*

October Hybrid Mini-Seminar

#### TOPICS

- Make AI Your Personal Genealogy Assistant
- Photo Identification & Discovery: 3 Case Studies

Members - \$10, Guests - \$25

See More information on pages 11 & 12 or on website: [www.SGSFL.com](http://www.SGSFL.com)





## President's Message

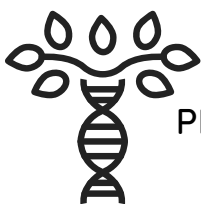
While on vacation in Europe I got to experience electric induction cook tops. I have to say they're very easy to use and maintain. I don't know why they haven't seen more acceptance in the US, maybe the prices are still too high. I was thinking then about my immigrant ancestors who came on a sailing ship in the 1850s with 500 other passengers.

How did they cook meals? Maybe huge pots of oatmeal, or, if lucky, stew, for all to share and did they eat more than once a day? I think they endured a lot to get to the US, but I haven't seen that they left many records about the trip.

Have you researched your immigrant ancestors to find answers to these kinds of questions?

*John Matthews*

## Genealogy and DNA IG



Monday, Sep 8 @

1:00-3:00 pm

PHL Conference Room

In-Person Meeting

open to everyone

**Topic: Family Search website work session**



Come join as we will be diving into how to explore Historical Records Search which Family Search has a huge archive of historical documents



Next Meeting: Monday Oct 20

## Genealogy Help Desk

Tues, Wed & Thurs

1:00-4:00 pm

PHL Genealogy Section



Need help researching online, breaking down a brick wall? Beginners and members are encouraged to stop by!

**Come join us at the Help Desk!**

## Board Meeting

All SGS Members are welcome to come to the Board meetings. They are on the first **Monday** of this month on ZOOM. The next meeting is on Oct 6, 2025 at 2:30pm

## SGS Board 2024-2026

**President:** John Matthews

**Vice President:** Eugene Girardi

**VP/Membership:** Shari Harmon

**VP/Programs:** Jean Van Horn

**Treasurer:** Joan Baptist

**Secretary:** Marianne Bradley

**Past President:** Robert Pierro

**Directors:** Redd Slyker

Ann James

Kim Croco-Brooks

### Committee Chairs & Others

**Education:** Ann James & Jean Van Horn

**Facebook:** Beth Bleich

**Help Desk:** Marianne Bradley

**Historian:** Ann James

**Library Liaison:** Peter Cannon

**Publicity:** **OPEN POSITION**

**Newsletter:** Kim Croco-Brooks

**Registered Agent:** Shari Harmon

**Sunshine:** Mary Jane Hough

**Web Development:** John Matthews

**DNA IG:** Robert Pierro & John Matthews

### Suncoast Genealogy Society

c/o Palm Harbor Library  
2330 Nebraska Ave.  
Palm Harbor, FL 34683

Proud Partner with



Beth Bleich

Kim Croco-Brooks

Dawn Dolling

Dan Hufnagel

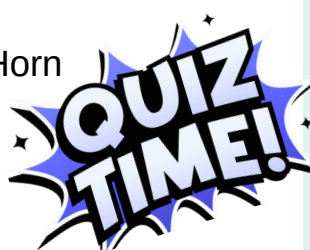
Debbie Smyth

Peter Van Horn



Which of these countries is said to have all of its primary church registers indexed?

- A. Ireland
- B. Scotland
- C. Wales
- D. Netherlands



ANSWER: Bottom of page 4

Questions?



Check our website:  
[sgsfl.com](http://sgsfl.com)

Email us:  
[info@sgsfl.com](mailto:info@sgsfl.com)

Connect with us on  
[Suncoast Genealogy Society Facebook](#)





# Our Genealogy Friends

## Pinellas Genealogy Society

Saturday, Sept 20 @ 11 am-1 pm

Hybrid Meeting & via Zoom

**Topic: Foods of Our Forefathers**

**Cuisine, Culture, and Cousins**

**by Peg Kapustiak**

<https://pinellaskenealogysociety.com/>

## Florida Genealogical Society – Tampa

<https://fgstampa.org/>

## Jewish Genealogical Society of Tampa Bay

<http://www.jgstb.org/>

## Tarpon Springs Library

Genealogy Research Assistance

(727) 943-4922 ext 6010

Monday, Sept 8 @ 6:30pm

**Topic: Genealogy Research Group**

<http://tarponlibrary.org/genealogy/>



## East Lake Community Library

4125 E Lake Rd. S, Palm Harbor, FL  
34685

Contact the library at 727-773-2665

## Largo Public Library

120 Central Park Dr, Largo, FL 33771

Contact the library at 727-586-7410

## Manatee Genealogical Society



Tuesday, Sept 9 @ 10am-12pm

Zoom

**Topic: “Being Betsey: Find Female  
Ancestors with Cluster Research**

**by Rebecca Whitman Koford**

<https://mgsfl.org>

## SAR, Clearwater Chapter

Members meet the 3rd Wednesday of the month,  
Sept thru May, 11:30 am, Dunedin Country Club.

Go to:

<https://www.facebook.com/SARClearwater/>  
for more information.

## DAR, Caladesi Chapter

Members meet the 3rd Monday of the month  
Sept thru May, 11:30 am, North Dunedin Baptist  
Church. Contact Debbie Smyth,  
[dsmyth927@gmail.com](mailto:dsmyth927@gmail.com) for more information

## Family Searcher Center

### St Petersburg/Seminole

9000 106<sup>th</sup> Ave N.

Largo, FL. 33777-1147

Hours:

Tues 10 am-6 pm;

Thurs 10 am-9 pm;

Sat 10 am-4 pm

[FL\\_StPetersburg@familyhistorymail.org](mailto:FL_StPetersburg@familyhistorymail.org)

Services: Computers, Photo negative  
scanner, Photo scanner, Printer

Answer: B. Scotland





## PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

We are looking for someone who would like to take on this position.

Please contact  
**John Matthews**

## Getting Involved

### GENEALOGY HELP DESK

Hone your research skills while helping others. It's the most rewarding job there is!

We can train you! Contact **Marianne Bradley** to volunteer and/or set up training time with one of the other volunteers.

## Other Local Resources

### Palm Harbor Museum

2043 Curlew Rd, Palm Harbor, FL 34683

Phone: (727) 724 -3054

Hours: Thurs, Fri and Sat; 10 am to 2 pm

<https://www.palmharbormuseum.com>

### Clearwater Historical Society

610 S Fort Harrison, Clearwater, FL 33756

Phone: (727) 754-8019

Hours: Wednesdays & Saturdays; 10 am-2 pm

<https://www.clearwaterhistoricalsociety.org>

### Tarpon Springs Area Historical Society

Historic Train Depot. Downtown Tarpon Springs, FL

160 East Tarpon Ave, Tarpon Springs, FL 34689

Phone: 727-943-4624

Hours: Wednesdays-Saturdays: 11:00 am-3:00 pm

<http://tarponspringsareahistoricalociety.org>

### Pinellas County Historical Society

<https://pchs.winniedesignandphoto.com>

### USF-Special Collections

140 7<sup>th</sup> Ave S, St. Petersburg, FL 33701

Phone: 727-873-4123

<https://lib.usf.edu>



### DNA Mentors Available

Struggling with understanding your DNA results? Have questions for with you can't find answers? Email [info@sgsfl.com](mailto:info@sgsfl.com) to get connected with a Mentor.

### DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SHARE?

Do you have an idea on how to improve our newsletter?

Do you have a story or a breakthrough?

Is there something you would like to share - a genealogy tip, a website or a an upcoming event?

Email your ideas to Kim Croco-Brooks:

[inhislovinghands10@yahoo.com](mailto:inhislovinghands10@yahoo.com)

## SGS MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES

Membership Meeting 23 August 2025

CALL TO ORDER: 1:37pm by Vice President Eugene Girardi

IN ATTENDANCE: 15

SECRETARY REPORT: by Marianne Bradley Approved by Ann James, 2nd by Joan Baptist

MEMBERSHIP REPORT: Shari Harmon - Approved by Jean Van Horn, 2nd, by Serrie Reres

GUESTS: 2 - Livia Lynn Hollis and Susan Pollard

TREASURER REPORT: Joan Baptist - \$6,705.49 Approved by Peggy Toohey, 2nd by Ann James

PROGRAMS REPORT: by Jean Van Horn - Approved by Marianne Bradley, 2nd by Sherrie Reres.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS: Motion for approval of the 10 Edition of the By-Laws by Jean Van Horn, 2nd by Shari Harmon

SHARE THE BASKET: Received by Kim Croco-Brooks

DRAWING FOR DOOR PRIZE: Shari Harmon won the book, Chester Creek Murders by Goodwin.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Next Special Interest/DNA Meeting - Sept. 8 on Family Search Website  
September 27, 2025 General Meeting by Diana Elder on Artificial Intelligence and Genealogy

ADJOURNMENT: 2:10PM

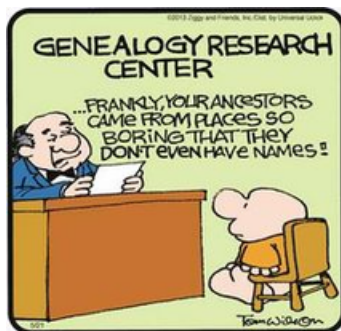
PROGRAM: Jean Van Horn hosted our SHOW & TELL program.

Participants: Joan Baptist, Marianne Bradley, Elaine Campoli, Eugene Girardi, Lynn Rae Kidd, Livia Hollis, Russ Martin, Sherrie Reres and Jean Van Horn.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Marianne Bradley, Secretary

### Did you know

Anyone that recruits two people to join SGS will receive a free one-year membership.



### FACEBOOK GROUPS

Are you part of our SGS Facebook Group or any other Genealogy Facebook groups? There are many groups that you can join.



THE SEARCHER

Do you have **QUESTIONS** about how to research, where to look for your ancestors, have a brickwall that you can not break? Have your questions ready for Megan Smolenyak by the November program.



# STORY TIME

## CHARLES EDWARD FARRIS - Grand Dad

I think perhaps you might be interested in a few facts about Grand Dad and Grandma Farris. Now this is Harold's parents. I'm sure you remember how I really loved these people - and they loved me in return.

They both had a very hard childhood. I know it is very hard for us who have had loving parents and been cared for all our lives to imagine what some children have to go through to just have a place to live.

First, I'll tell you bout Grand Dad. His father was in the Civil War, he was a Sergeant. He picked up some disease while in the service - I think it was chronic dysentery - many of the soldiers had died from that. Grand Dad was just a very young child at that time. I think he had three brothers and three sisters and when he was four years old his mother died. None of the children were old enough to take care of the two youngest boys so he and his brother, Jess, were sent to an orphanage which was an orphanage for dependent children of soldiers. It was located in Davenport, Iowa.

By the stories Grand Dad told us it just wasn't the best place to be raised. They soon found out they had to fight for what they wanted.

There was a fife and drum corp made up of the orphanage children and Grand Dad just wanted so badly to belong in it, but he didn't have an instrument. In his little mind he knew he had to have something to help him learn the rhythm of the music, so he took his pocket knife out and cut a piece of wood out of the window sill and carved himself a set of "bones". The way you played the bones was you held them between you fingers in one hand and hit them together and keep time with the music. After he got the hang of keeping time with the music he was sure he could teach himself to play the drums. So now he had to have some drum sticks, so he found an old wooden chair seat and carved a pair of drum sticks. When the fife and drum practiced Grand Dad played right along with them on any surface that was handy.

One day the corp master said he needed a drummer and wondered if anyone knew how to play the drums. Grand Dad was ready when the opportunity came along and he was in. I can just see him in my minds eye - a little fellow - 9 or 10 years old - with his little back so straight marching so proudly in step with the fife and drum corp.

I don't know if the house mother ever found out about the window sill that was ruined, he never told us that if she did.

Jay now has the "Bones" as a keepsake from Grand Dad. When we would go out to visit when the children were young, Grand Dad always had to play the "Bones" for them.

Grand Dad was determined to leave the orphanage at the very first opportunity. When he was 15 years old his sister, Ida, had married and she asked him to come to Ohio to be with her. After he became 16 he worked in a table factory. Then later on he worked on the railroad. The family moved back to Iowa and Grand Dad started to work for different farmers. He evidently liked farming because he remained a farmer the rest of his life.



Ed and Cora Farris



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By Lynn Rae Kidd





## Books by Series

### Ellie McLellan Genealogy Mystery

Ellie McLellan loves genealogy, solving mysteries, and meeting with her senior group at her best friend, Maggie's, Cozy Corner Cafe, in the small town of Percyville, Quebec.

Ellie teaches her group how to write their own memoirs, while dealing with various interesting genealogy mysteries that come her way. Come join the group where you'll find a touch of humor, a dab of romance, and lots of research.

## Family Secrets



What would you do to keep your family safe? Widowed genealogist Ellie McLellan has spent years healing her ravished heart by carefully constructing a new and quiet life away from the hungry glare of the paparazzi. She now fills her days with genealogical research for various clients, safe in the small town of Percyville, Quebec.

Until her bid to save a child's life is caught on camera and ambitious tabloid reporter Diane Cooper recognizes her. Turns out Ellie is not safe at all.

With Diane sniffing around for dirt and her "big break" story, Ellie learns a dark family secret with the power to destroy the only family she has left—and the first tentative relationship she's dared to believe in since that fateful day she lost everything.

There are 9  
books in this  
collection

## ABOUT BETH FARRAR

I've been a voracious reader from the moment my parents gave me the best gift ever - a library card! And when I was a teenager, my grandfather handed me a gold signet ring that belonged to his grandmother, thus sparking my passion for family history.

For close to fifteen years I wrote a column called Living Country in an English language newspaper north of Montreal, called Main Street, where I shared everyday stories about raising my three sons with my hubby in a log cabin on a lake. I also wrote articles about genealogy and how people could start building their own family trees.



## 2025- 2026 MEETINGS

- 27 September: Speaker: Diana Elder  
Understanding AI in Genealogy: Foundations and Tools
- 25 October Mini-Seminar: Speaker: Lisa Louise Cook
1. Tasks AI Can Do for Your Genealogy Research at Lightning Speed
  2. Seeing Family History Through Google Lens
- 22 November: Speaker: Megan Smolenyak  
Questions & Answers
- 02 December: Christmas Party at Johnny's Italian Restaurant
- 24 January: Speaker: Karen Fortin

Joan Baptist is a member of Suncoast Genealogy Society and has been its Treasurer since 2021. She has been a hobbyist genealogist since the late 1970s, when she embarked on a decades-long journey to identify her maternal biological ancestors. Over the years Joan adapted to, learned, and applied to her research efforts all the new technology and resources that became available.

In more recent years, Joan has turned her attention and research to her paternal French-Canadian roots, becoming proficient in Canadian genealogical research. It is this specialized knowledge that she enjoys sharing with others.

Joan has lived in the Tampa Bay area for over sixty years and has a varied professional background, including mortgage banking, project management, and technical writing of online help and policies and procedures. In her retirement she shares her Clearwater home with a sweet little YorkiePoo, Maggie, and a Maine Coon cat Gracie (named after her French-Canadian great-great grandmother Gracieuse).

Register on our library calendar!

SCAN ME

EAST LAKE Community Library

Suncoast Genealogy Society  
Palm Harbor, Florida  
Presents

**Genealogy Research in Quebec and Maritime Provinces**  
Wednesday,  
September 24, 2025,  
6:00pm

Learn how to research ancestors from Quebec and the Maritime provinces despite the French language barrier.

Discover the rich history of New France colonization and how ancestors adapted to social and political changes.

Joan Baptist from the Suncoast Genealogy Society will provide historical context to aid your research, and so much more!

For more information about the Suncoast Genealogy Society, please visit: <https://sgsfl.com/>

East Lake Community Library  
4125 East Lake Road  
Palm Harbor, FL 34685  
727-773-2665 (Book)  
[eastlakelibrary.org](http://eastlakelibrary.org)

Link to website page: [Genealogy Research in Quebec and Maritime Provinces with Joan Baptist from Suncoast Genealogy | East Lake Community Library](https://sgsfl.com/)



# SHOW & TELL

HOSTED BY  
JEAN VAN HORN

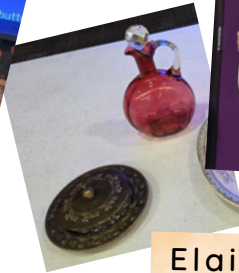
## AUGUST MEETING



Jean sharing her Indian costume & glass vase



Eugene sharing his grandmother's handy work



Elaine sharing her great grandmother's Jesse McRae collection



Livia sharing her great grandfather's brass greyhound



Sherrie sharing her father's shot glass & more

Marianne sharing her collection of heirlooms from her ancestors & having 6<sup>th</sup> generation of furniture



Russ sharing his great grandfather's certificate



Joan sharing about her grandfather's diary, post cards, poem & travels during WWI



Shari won door prize Chester Creek Murders by Goodwin







Proud Partnership with



# Suncoast Genealogy Society

## 25 Oct 2025 SGS Mini-Seminar

1:00-4:00 pm, Palm Harbor Library  
Speaker Live on Zoom

*Lisa Louise Cooke*

October Hybrid Mini-Seminar

Lisa Louise Cooke is the author of several books including *The Genealogist's Google Toolbox*, 3rd edition. She produces the popular Genealogy Gems Podcast, as well as videos through the Genealogy Gems YouTube channel and a Premium Membership service at her website at [GenealogyGems.com](http://GenealogyGems.com). She also writes a regular column for Family Tree Magazine and produces the Family Tree Magazine Podcast.



### TOPICS

#### Make AI Your Personal Genealogy Assistant

Discover how Artificial Intelligence tools can act as your personal genealogy assistant. Learn the best strategies for using AI to help you with a variety of genealogy tasks, from organizing information to identifying new research avenues. This session also covers how to automate repetitive tasks and streamline your genealogical workflow. Discover the incredible potential of AI to enhance your genealogy research!

#### Photo Identification & Discovery: 3 Case Studies

In this session, you'll see how free tech tools and some creative sleuthing strategies turned unidentified photos into identified treasures. These techniques are also excellent for making new photo discoveries. You can do this too, and this class will show you how!

Members - \$10, Guests - \$25

See Registration form on website: [www.SGSFL.com](http://www.SGSFL.com)

For more information go to: [www.SGSFL.com](http://www.SGSFL.com)

Member Supported. Public Always Welcome



# Suncoast Genealogy Society

## Fall Mini-Seminar Registration Form

**Saturday, 25 October 2025, 1:00 - 4:00 pm**

at the Palm Harbor Library, Clearwater, or on Zoom

**Featuring: Lisa Louise Cooke**

Register by mail and check. **Registrations must be postmarked by Tues., Oct. 21, 2025.**

PLEASE PRINT:

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **\*\*Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*Email is required to receive the meeting link.**

Please indicate if you are: \_\_\_\_\_ Member of Suncoast Genealogy Society (SGS) or a \_\_\_\_\_ Non-Member

If you are a member of another genealogy society, please let us know which one

\_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate if you expect to attend \_\_\_\_ in person \_\_\_\_ via Zoom

SEMINAR FEE(S): (Add number of registrations) \_\_\_\_ \$10 SGS Member \_\_\_\_ \$25 Non-Member

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Check Total Check # \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE: No refund requests accepted after Tues. 21 Oct. 2025**

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**MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: *SUNCOAST GENEALOGY SOCIETY***

**Mail check and completed Registration Form to:**

**Shari Harmon  
1864 Northwood Drive  
Clearwater, FL 33764**

For questions or more information email: **info@SGSFL.com**

**Reminder:** Registration envelope **MUST** be postmarked by **Tues, 21 Oct. 2025**